A Sense of Self

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/11925240.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Hannibal (TV), Doctor Strange (2016), The Path (TV), Hannibal Extended Universe - Fandom
Relationships:	Kaecilius (Marvel)/Cal Roberts, Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Kaecilius (Marvel), Cal Roberts, Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	StrangePath, Drinking, Alcohol Abuse/Alcoholism, Reality Bending, Time Travel, (sort of), Happy Ending, season 4, Hannibal Extended Universe, Podfic Welcome, do not copy to another site
Language:	English
Series:	Part 1 of Tagged For Time Travel, Part 9 of Tiger's S4 Hannigram fics, Part 26 of Tiger's Mads x Hugh Rare Pair fics
Stats:	Published: 2017-08-27 Words: 1,683 Chapters: 1/1

A Sense of Self

by TigerPrawn

Summary

After the fall, amnesiac Will Graham was taken in by the Meyerist movement and started over as Cal Roberts. Hannibal met a fate far stranger and he has gone to great lengths to find Will and return him to his old self whether the universe likes it or not, and regardless of any consequences for the rest of the universe.

Notes

I already actually posted this as a chapter in An Inflated Sense of Self and two drabble sequences in my Drabble Collection. I'm reposting now together and with an addendum to the ending so that I can play around with this idea as part of a new series that I've been thinking about for a while - Tagged for Time Travel.

“You have an inflated sense of self.” The words were spat out and the voice boomed in the small cabin, as though the acoustics were those you would find in a large and high vaulted cathedral or monastery.

Cal sat with his head in his hands in the corner of the cold cabin. How long would this voice plague him? It had been with him since the day he had awoken, 4 years earlier, on the rocks. He had no memory, of what came before that. He had swam away, wandered, been lost. And then he had been found by the Meyerist Movement and his life had been given a meaning.

Even so, all the while the voice had grown in his head, expanded. Sometimes it felt like it wasn’t in his head at all but all around him, surrounding him and penetrating him. And now, as Dr. Stephen Meyer lay dying, and Cal had sought an escape into a bottle of whiskey, it sounded. As all he had come to know and based his continued stability and happiness upon felt on the verge of crumbling, the voice was at once tormenting and familiar. The only constant he’d had since waking to this new life.

“You are not all you seem Cal Roberts. You are not the man you think you are.”

“Stop it!” Cal screamed into the empty room. “I am the man, the right man, I can lead them… I am…”

Cal was halted by a dark laughter. *“How can you lead people to discover the truth within themselves when you do not even know yours.”*

“Leave me alone!” Cal shouted and buried his head once more.

For weeks now the voice had gone from quiet pestering, what Cal had once thought were his own doubts about himself manifest, to a clear and separate entity questioning him.

Cal knew, for it had now become clear, that he was going mad.

Another booming laugh as he thought that. *"Madness! You can wish for madness, that would be a comfort. That would be a better end than the one you gave me."*

"I don't understand what you want."

There was silence for a moment and then the voice gentled a little though was no less loud. *"I want you to know me, see me."*

"See you how? See what?" Cal felt the tears streaming down his face, they clouded his vision and at first he didn't see the distortion in the air. The cold air was breaking apart as though it were crystals, bending and smashng like prisms against the rocks.

Was this the drink? How much had he had? This was rock bottom now, he knew that. He needed help. He should leave and get help.

He struggled to his feet and started to stumble across the room, seeking the keys to his car. But then the room cracked. The air shattered and a figure was standing before him.

"Who… what are you?" Cal's words shook.

"I am pain and death." The form hissed.

Cal tried to move, tried to run but the figure moved like liquid – one fluid motion until they stood face to face.

"You can see me now." The voice quiet and gentle, as though the roar of a thunderstorm had dissipated to a gentle breeze. The man, for he appeared to be no less of a man though his eyes burned and energy crackled around him, placed a warm hand on Cal's cheek.

Cal startled and stepped back, falling bodily only to be saved from the floor by the inflatable mattress he had placed there some time ago. The air was almost all gone and he bounced only a little before it came to rest and he could feel the cold hard floor beneath.

He tried to catch his breath, tried to bottle his fear as the man dropped to his knees beside him and, with nowhere for Cal to retreat, stoked his face once more.

"So long I have waited to break back into this reality. To return after you expelled me. Should I be angry? Should I take revenge?" His eyes were soft, gentle, despite the fear his words inspired in Cal.

"I… I don't understand…"

A smile then, and it lit the man's whole face. Beautiful and terrible at once.

"You need only understand this – I have returned. I will seek my revenge on mankind and…" the voice softened to a whisper, eyes met his and smile warmed the strange face. "… I have missed you so very much Will Graham."

*

Will Graham. That was familiar wasn't it? But vague, like a dream. Like something from a dream.

Cal Roberts stared at the road ahead, almost unseeing, and just hoped that he wouldn't fall asleep. The alcohol was gone from his system after a day of fitful sleep, but the night's darkness weighed heavy on him. In the seat next to him sat a man who was not a man. A being who had been someone else, so he said. As he said Cal was someone else. Even in the dark he knew the man was awake. He could feel him.

*

When the man, shrouded in light and terrible, had appeared in the cabin, Cal had presumed it a fevered alcohol driven dream. Words had no meaning and the man called him Will, told him he would help him remember. He had spoken of living and dying and living again in another dimension until he was able to harness the power to return. To return to his love. To Will Graham. To Cal.

And he had kissed Cal. Something so familiar but at once other-worldly. A power in it that Cal craved.

He could still feel the pressure on his lips.

*

The sun rose on the unchanging horizon that Cal Roberts, his Will Graham, moved the car through. The roads so familiar and yet so strange, so different through these new eyes. Much as his Will, changed but the same. Contained. Waiting.

He would draw him out. He would have him restored. He had the power to do this now, after everything, after all the sacrifices. He had the power to restore his love.

And so he instructed and was followed, as he was accustomed. He watched the road as this new Will drove them towards the house on the bluff.

*

Cal wasn't sure when he'd slept last, and though he was exhausted in body and mind, he wasn't actually tired. He felt no need or desire to sleep. Magic perhaps? Something at least. A thrall that he'd never known of a man, not even Stephen Meyer himself. Because he couldn't fool himself that enigmatic and charming was the same as actual magic.

Magic, of course. He mused with an uneasy smile, as the man who was not a man stood on the outcropping of the bluff he'd brought them to and distorted the very air around them. A demon perhaps?

*

The man's eyes burned purple, molten, demonic. They might burn through him.
Air was knocked from Cal as he was pulled close, eyes boring into him. They stood on the bluff. On the precipice of- something.

“What are you?” Cal’s voice didn’t quite sound like his own. Something there, an accent that wasn’t his, a lilt, an intonation that lit up the man’s burning eyes.

“I am death and pain… but to you. I am love. My Will.” Burning lips were on his then and Cal found he didn’t want to pull away as the air swirled around them, thick.

*

“I will have you back!” He spoke the words firmly, there was no uncertainty left. He had made all the right incantations, taken the right paths to get here. To find Will. He would reunite them finally.

Lifetimes lost, or just this one? He wasn’t sure anymore. Magic blurred everything. The magic he had sought and mastered to bring him to this end. To finally bring him here. He would have Will Graham back.

He said the words, he felt the magic run through them and around them. He held the man in his arms. The man who was Will.

*

He could no longer see anything around him but colour. Light. Finally Cal could see the light. But not his light, not his truth. Someone else's. Will’s?

He saw things in those colours, the snake that plagued him. A mongoose. Heard words- *Did you never wonder why you wouldn’t let her touch you, taste you? You are mine alone. Always mine even when you did not know me. You will see. You will see me.*

He felt pressure all around him. A press and a pull. Ripping inside his mind. Cal’s mind. Will’s mind. He was remembering. He could see.

*

They stood within a tornado of colour that threatened to take them over the edge. But it would not. Not again. He held his Will close. Said the words despite the powers pulling at him, the fabric of the universe itself trying to tear them apart. Trying to stop him from righting this mistake.

He would have Will remember himself, he would have him back.

Noise. He had to shout the words. A crescendo. Until it dropped.

The man in his arms slumped. Alive or dead?

He held his breath. He waited.

And then eyes flickered open.

“Hannibal?”

He smiled.

Addendum:

When the tornado of energy dropped from the bluff it sank, as their bodies once had.

It plunged into the depths, into and through the planet, gathering momentum until it blasted beyond the confines of the atmosphere. Spreading like a wave of pulsing energy from the planet and out through the universe.

This was why he had been warned.

The alterations his actions might cause. The changes that now might happen.

The versions of them throughout the universe that might be brought together again and again in order to continually right the wrong Hannibal had wanted to, and did, correct.

His teacup had come back together.

Across this universe, parallel versions, backwards and forwards in history throughout all of time - teacups came back together.

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